



*Remarks by Colonel Dave Brown, Deputy
Commander, Mississippi Valley Division,
at the Red River Compact Commission Meeting,
Austin, Texas, 25 April 2000*

Good morning. I'm COL Dave Brown, Deputy Division Commander for the Mississippi Valley Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

On behalf of MG Anderson, I thank you for the opportunity to speak today. The Mississippi Valley Division remarks will be a little different than those given in past years.

My remarks will briefly discuss allegations the Corps faces that pertain to the Upper Mississippi and Illinois Waterway System Navigation Study, as well as the allegations concerning the Corps' attempt to "grow the program." Additionally, I will comment on the challenges we face in the 21st century.

Now, to those allegations and negative press that the Corps of Engineers has received in the past several weeks.

The Corps stands behind its integrity and our ability to make unbiased recommendations to the Administration and Congress. All of our studies and reports must represent our best judgment of the benefits and costs to the Nation for any improvements we propose and must consider all points of view.

We are required to follow a specific development process on all studies.

We have not produced even a draft report at this point. We are now in the draft development process, and many reviews will be conducted before the study is completed.

In fact, any recommendation will receive two public reviews, a Headquarters policy review, State and Federal agency review, further reviews by the Assistant Secretary of the Army and Office of Management & Budget before getting clearance to submit the report to Congress for authorization and later funding.

We are very confident that the checks and balances provided by our objective and unbiased process will ensure that the public, the Administration, and the Congress are provided with the information needed to make an informed decision on the future needs of the upper Mississippi and Illinois Waterway System.

The Corps welcomes and actively solicits input to our studies from all stakeholders, and our process is set up to ensure that.

Now, with respect to concerns that the Corps is "growing its program" for its own benefit. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The Nation has many water resource needs that have not been addressed. Locks are aging. Congestion is increasing on our waterways. Urban development demands flood and hurricane protection. Many ecosystems are suffering and badly need restoration. Municipalities and industries need reliable sources of water supply of adequate quality and quantity.

These and other unmet needs must be recognized, discussed, and responsibly brought to the attention of the appropriate policy makers. The Corps' concept of investing in the nation is simply to ensure that these needs are clearly identified and that viable solutions are offered.

The Corps has high standards of excellence and integrity in developing solutions to water resource problems.

You should know that 86 percent of problems studied do not meet the Corps' standards for recommending project construction. In addition, of the projects we do construct, our average annual rate of return on investment is 26 percent.

The Corps maintains these high standards of excellence even as we have reduced our manpower by almost 10 percent during the past 4 years.

Regarding our water resource needs, the Corps will hold a series of "listening sessions" across the country to stimulate dialogue concerning those needs.

In the Mississippi Valley Division, our listening session will be in St Louis, June 15th through 17th, in conjunction with our already scheduled Partnering Conference, which I'll discuss later.

Each Corps division will be conducting at least one listening session. These sessions will be led by professional facilitators.

We value your opinion. We want to hear what you believe are the needs to be addressed in the water resources arena. Because it will take the effort of the Corps and all our partners to overcome the challenges of the water resources requirements of the future.

I have handed out our current Corps pamphlet entitled "Join the Dialogue, America's Water Resources Challenges for the 21st Century."

Listed in this pamphlet are the 6 major challenges that face the Corps, and the nation. I hope you'll take the time to read over the information in this document. Now, let me touch on a few of the challenges you'll read about in the pamphlet.

The first challenge I want to mention is our navigation system. Our marine transportation system may not be able to meet 21st century demands.

Every year, more than **a half billion tons** of commodities are moved in our area on the Mississippi River navigation system. This equates to more than **\$114 billion dollars** of domestic and international freight.

Much of our system is already working at or near capacity, and traffic is expected to double in the next 20 years.

We need deeper ports to accommodate today's mega-containerships and modernized locks to ensure smooth operations.

Another challenge we face is, of course, **flooding** -- it continues to threaten our nation's communities.

The Mississippi Valley Division has made a major investment in flood damage reduction. There are 35 flood control lakes and reservoirs, more than 8,500 miles of levees and dikes, and hundreds of smaller local flood protection projects that have prevented close to **\$271 billion dollars** in flood damages since 1928. Every \$1 invested in flood damage reduction projects prevents \$27 in damages.

However, MVD still spends an average of **\$440 million per year** on flood damages.

Flooding - the most common and costly natural disaster in America - is worsening as development continues in flood-prone areas and along coastlines.

Repairing damage to our environment is another challenge we face. Until the passage of the National Environmental Policy Act in 1970, economic development took precedence over environmental considerations.

Forests, grasslands, wetlands, and river systems were destroyed. While water resources projects built today include environmental protection within their scope, the environment is still suffering from past actions.

Much needs to be done to clean up, restore, and improve the environment.

This fiscal year, **approximately 20 percent** of our overall program is dedicated to environmental work.

Another challenge is the lack of adequate water and sewer systems in many communities. Flight to the suburbs has left behind scarred city neighborhoods with crumbling infrastructure and abandoned industrial sites known as "brownfields."

Many cities, rural areas, and urban areas don't have the funds to upgrade their water distribution systems. They also lack the money to clean their brownfields; and contaminated run-off from these past industrial developments threatens local water supplies.

Yet another challenge is that America's water resources infrastructure may not support future generations.

Water infrastructure -- which includes water supply and treatment systems, flood protection works, water transportation systems, hydropower facilities, and water recreation sites - contributes to our quality of life and national prosperity.

Unfortunately, the national investment in water resources has not kept pace with economic and social expansion. In 1960, public infrastructure investments amounted to 3.9 percent of the Gross Domestic Product. Today, the figure is approximately 2.6 percent.

At current investment rates, our water resources infrastructure will be unable to support the greater demands of a rapidly expanding population and economy.

The last challenge I'll mention is that of our **emergency response** mission -- our capability to respond to natural disasters is being stretched.

Natural disasters and other national emergencies are expensive, as well as destructive, costing people their lives, homes, livelihoods, and sense of well being.

Besides the economic losses, there are many indirect costs associated with natural disasters, such as business shut-downs, loss of income and tax revenue, transportation delays, illness, and impacts on other government programs.

PARTNERING CONFERENCE

Those are 6 of the major challenges that face this nation; however, they are not all inclusive.

That's why forums such as our upcoming Partnering Conference are so important.

Our MVD Partnering Conference and listening sessions will be held in St. Louis, June 15th through 17th. I have handed out flyers regarding the conference.

Please call the telephone number listed on the flyer if you need more information about this meeting.

We want to continue our efforts to connect with all of the river's stakeholders to establish a dialogue that might resolve conflicts, build trust, and create common ground for cooperative efforts.

Through a series of workshops at our Partnering Conference, our objective will be to provide the Administration and the Mississippi River Congressional Caucus with the common themes we hear on the six issues I just mentioned.

I believe this conference has great potential to help us all better understand and prioritize the water resource and environmental needs in the Mississippi Valley.

We need your input, feedback, and comments to accomplish this.

To that end, I hope to see many of you in St. Louis in June.

Your opinions and comments are important to us, we want to hear what you have to say about water resource needs, not only for the Mississippi River Valley, but also for the nation. Your input will help define specific needs and find solutions to the challenges that face us all.

Thank you for this opportunity to give the Mississippi Valley Division presentation this morning.